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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000565

DEPARTMENT FOR DS/IP/AF, DS/TIA/ITA, DS/IP/SPC/SO, INR,
AF/E, LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/01/2028

TAGS: ASEC ER PGOV PHUM PREL

SUBJECT: REGIONAL MEETING ON FOOD SHORTAGES AND CRIME IN
ASMARA

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) During a community meeting with regional administrators in the village of Adi Segodo (located approximately 3 miles NW of Asmara) on 11/23/08, local residents asked the administrator for increased rations, stating the 10 kilos of sorghum per month was not enough to feed their families. An embassy locally engaged staff member attended this meeting and said the audience members were extremely angry and hostile towards the Eritrean government officials. The administrator told the group of 2000 assembled residents of this area that the Eritrean government has been unable to buy larger quantities of sorghum and other staples from Sudan, because the USG has purchased all of the available quantities at inflated prices. The administrator also stated all of the food and economic problems in Eritrea are due to the actions of the USG and that the assembled group "must hate the American government and the American people."

¶2. (C) The zoba administrator said there has been a marked increase in crime in Asmara and the Adi Segodo region, with over 500 reported criminal acts in this small region in the last month, over 150 of which were violent crimes. He said all residents must call the police if they witness or are the victims of any crime.

¶3. (C) PoQtQComments: The effects of food shortages and increased levels of crime continue to be seen in Asmara. Post has not corroborated this information, but continues to hear comments from local residents that the Eritrean government publicly scapegoats the USG for all of the problems in Eritrea.

MCMULLEN